



BOB McMULLAN MP

Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance
Member for Fraser

Sister Libby Rogerson IBVM
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in New South Wales
PO Box 259
ROSEBERRY NSW 1445

19 DEC 2008

Dear Sr Rogerson

Thank you for your letter dated 5 December 2008 regarding the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The Australian Government shares your concern for the people of the DRC. The situation outlined in Caritas Australia's report *Forsaken Voices: Rape and Plunder in the Democratic Republic of Congo* is tragic.

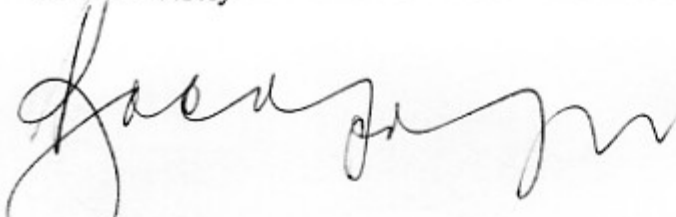
The Government recently announced a contribution of \$5 million in response to the growing crisis in the DRC. This contribution will be given to United Nations (UN) agencies and Australian non-government organisations for their operations in the east of the DRC where the humanitarian situation has deteriorated significantly following increased violence in late October 2008. Australia's contribution will help these organisations provide assistance with food; non-food items such as blankets, cooking implements, shelter; protection for women and children; water, sanitation and hygiene; health care; and humanitarian coordination.

Australia has also provided substantial support to the UN peacekeeping operation in the DRC – the Mission of the UN in the DRC (MONUC). Australia has contributed over \$130 million to date, including more than \$22 million in the 2007-08 financial year and in excess of \$15 million so far in 2008-09.

The Government is committed to enhancing its engagement in Africa, including through humanitarian assistance. The Government has increased the allocation of aid to Africa to \$116.4 million in the 2008-09 budget. This represents an increase of 23 per cent on the previous year. The Government's commitment has been further demonstrated through recent humanitarian relief funding including \$10 million for Ethiopia in response to drought and the resulting food insecurity, and \$8 million for Zimbabwe for essential humanitarian assistance. Australia will continue to forge broader and deeper relations with the countries of Africa and play its part in the peace and security of the continent of Africa, including the DRC.

I hope this information has been useful. Thank you for your interest in Australia's aid program.

Yours sincerely



BOB McMULLAN